

CURRENTS



OCTOBER 2016 COUNCIL FOR ADVANCEMENT A

EDUCATION

Ready for the World

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TO THEIR SCHOOL

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A Global M

How international schools make the case for support to a diverse and wide



CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION: A local dance group performs the Dragon Dance with a dragon made by parents during the United Nations International School of Hanoi's 25th Birthday Ball in April 2013. Parents saw the school's birthday fund, which supported service-learning projects, as a channel for their charitable giving.

Emma Silva faced many challenges when she became the United Nations International School of Hanoi's first advancement director in 2011, but this was the biggest: helping her new community understand why the outwardly prosperous school needed to raise funds.

Silva seized on the idea of the school's 25th birthday in 2012 to help her fledgling, one-person advancement shop take flight. "Everyone understands a birthday," she says.

mindset

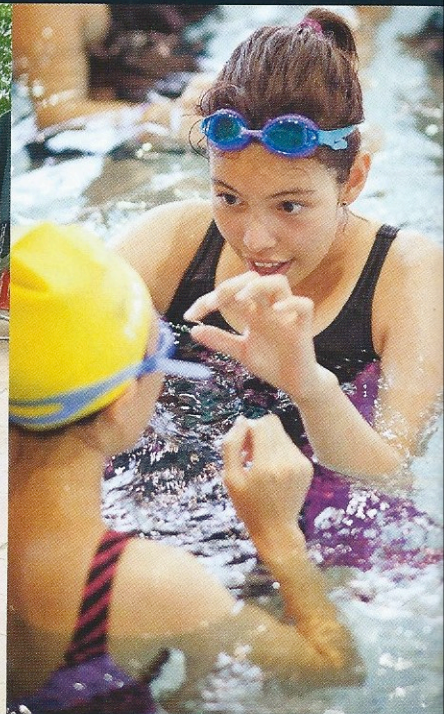
BY SUSAN DALZELL

dispersed constituency

NOI PICTURES



A Global Mindset



Silva used a birthday celebration to help parents view UNIS Hanoi as a channel for their charitable giving. The school has an extensive service-learning program, due to its association with the U.N., and gifts to a 25th birthday fund supported six such projects at partner agencies, including a mobile book drive, a center for disabled and abandoned children, and a swim-training program for local schools. The gifts also helped expand volunteer opportunities at the agencies for UNIS Hanoi students.

“Our school was established to help develop Vietnam, and our community includes many families committed to that mission,” Silva says, noting that many parents work for the U.N., embassies, and nongovernmental organizations. The school exceeded its target of U.S. \$25,000, raising more than \$37,000 through an auction and ball. Parents gave because the funds benefited their children’s education and helped Vietnam. “We learned that there is a capacity and willingness to give. It set up the foundation for more institutional fundraising.”

Tapping into that inclination to give can be a daunting challenge for international schools. Cultural differences, transient families, perceptions of institutional wealth, and relatively young pools of alumni

all conspire to make fundraising difficult. Throw in a board with unrealistic expectations, and the task is downright intimidating.

And yet.

More international schools are recognizing the importance of alumni relations, communications, and fundraising. CASE’s *Fundraising in International Schools Report 2016* found that 82 percent of the international schools surveyed had a fundraising or development office. The marketplace is changing. Once a bastion for expats whose tuition was paid by corporations, international schools now attract middle-class families in developing and emerging economies. The schools can help launch their children into universities around the world. “Increasing numbers of folks recognize the value of an international school,” says Kevin Glass, headmaster for Atlanta International School and a veteran staffer of international schools on four continents.

The number of English-medium K–12 schools grew 41.5 percent in the past five years to a total of 8,257 worldwide, according to the International School Council’s 2016 *Research Global Report*. By 2026, ISC predicts, K–12 international schools will number 16,000. As competition increases, schools will feel

LEFT TO RIGHT: EMMA SILVA; TIM BARNESLEY; UNIS HANOI; TIM BARNESLEY



THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

GIFTS GALORE: The UNIS Hanoi Advancement Program helps support (from left) teacher training for caregivers of disabled children; swim lessons for disadvantaged children; and scholarships for local students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Nam Nguyen, the scholarship fund's first recipient (pictured here), graduated in 2015.



pressure to build new facilities and offer the latest technologies. Competition for students and teaching staff can be fierce; tuition needs to be affordable, but faculty salaries need to grow.

At UNIS Hanoi, Silva now heads a team of five and is making progress toward a five-year goal of raising \$2.5 million to create three new scholarships for Vietnamese students. Two years into the campaign, pledges and gifts total nearly \$845,000.

Get Your Board Onboard

More schools are opening advancement offices, but many don't understand the full scope of development work, says Mike Miller, a partner with MLW Consultants and a 40-year advancement veteran who advises international schools in Asia, Europe, and North America. "Do they know why they are doing it? Not necessarily. Do boards and heads understand how this fits into the big picture? No," he says. "They have expectations for making money, but they don't understand all the separate but interdependent functions like strategic planning, communications and marketing, and alumni relations."

Miller consulted with UNIS Hanoi for two years before the school advertised for Silva's position. He

facilitated visits to schools with more advanced programs and helped the board determine what type of advancement program would work best for their school, factoring in its mission and community. "Having a board that thought it through is tremendous," Silva says. "So often schools start fundraising because of a specific issue: 'Oh, we need a new gymnasium. Let's fundraise.' Mike helped our board really think about what they wanted advancement to achieve for the future of the school and not make it just about dollar signs."

Instead of asking Silva to start fundraising immediately, the board asked her to take a year to learn about the school and its community before formulating an advancement plan.

Board members may need education on everything from financial goals to staffing needs to appropriate time frames for achieving objectives, says Lynn Wells, director of advancement for the International School of Kenya. Boards may think in terms of months, but institutions sometimes need years to see tangible results from advancement efforts.

Wells learned this when he established the advancement office at the American International School of Bucharest in 2001. The board assumed fundraising



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would almost immediately cover office expenses, fund three positions, plus contribute money to the school's budget—expectations that Wells realized only after starting the job. Twelve years later, when he left to work for ISK, he appreciated that his new board had a better understanding of his role. Shortly before he began in 2013, he attended a retreat with ISK's board of governors, board of directors, and senior administrative team. "They clearly understood advancement," he says. He had a budget in place, a clearly defined role, and realistic goals. All he had to do was roll up his sleeves and get to work.

At NIST International School in Bangkok, creating a recognizable identity is part of the school's groundwork for its nascent advancement program, which is transitioning from two to three smaller campaigns per year into a single continuous campaign that would tie all fundraising efforts together. NIST is at capacity for enrollment, but the market is competitive—Bangkok has 100 other international schools, many of them for-profits—and NIST wants to maintain its high standing.

"We don't need to market ourselves, but we need to define our niche," says Jared Kuruzovich, communications manager. The school is now better aligned with its founding values, when NIST was closely related to the United Nations. "We want this school to be about enriching the world and not about money or getting into the best universities," Kuruzovich says. Formulating that vision meant extensive consultations with the board as well as with school leadership, parents, staff, and students discussing the school's long-term goals and identity. Communications now emphasize NIST's altruistic mission.

Educate Your Community

Having 40 to 60 different nations represented in international school classrooms isn't unusual. Some schools have up to 90—and such diversity means advancement has to be extra diligent and creative. Whether they are American, Singaporean, or German, parents often face a steep learning curve before they become willing to give. Advancement staff often hear, "What do you mean you want more money? I pay my tuition."

A large number of parents may be living abroad for the first time, as is the case at Zurich International School, where Michaela Seeger is director of community relations. "They may come from countries where

THE LINK
International School of Kenya
April 11, 2014

From the Director
Annual FOTA Art Exhibition—Opening Tonight
Join us for the opening evening of this year's FOTA Art Exhibition. This exhibition works to bring back some East Africa. It is a perfect opportunity to find a piece of artwork that would mean a lot to someone close to you.

From the Elementary School Principal
Child Protection Consultant Visit
This week I was very pleased to welcome Dr. Lois Engelbrecht, a child protection consultant, to our school community. The great news is that she will be visiting all the different schools in our school community. The primary purpose of her visit was:
• To provide training for all staff and parents in a way that helps them be aware and understand the personal safety, needs, and rights of children, so that children in our care are provided the best possible protection from abuse and neglect.
• To help us design a way forward to developing protocols in Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle, and High School.
• To help us set up a Child Protection Response Network and to help us set up a MDT (Multi-Disciplinary Team) in each grade.

Calendar:
October 2016
Tuesday, April 12, 6:30 am - PTO Executive Meeting (closed)
Thursday, April 14, 2:15 pm - ISK Joint Work Assembly
Friday, April 15, Public Holiday - No School
Monday, April 18, Public Holiday - No School

MESSAGING MAKEOVER: The International School of Kenya transformed its weekly electronic newsletter (above), refreshing content and design. Stories in the new bimonthly version (at right and below) focus on student and school achievements. By improving the style, frequency, and content of its communications, ISK readied its community for a new fundraising effort.

The LINK
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF KENYA OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER
SPECIAL EDITION

Farewell & Thank you!
Kwaheri ya Kuonana! Asante!
Thank you for seven years of dedication to ISK. You will be missed!

PARENTS TEACHERS ORGANISATION SAY GOODBYE & WELCOME!

PTO WELCOME TO NEW FAMILIES
The PTO's Executive Committee and Parenting PTO Council, ISK & Community are proud to welcome new families to ISK. We are excited to have you join our community and we are committed to providing you with the best possible experience. We are committed to providing you with the best possible experience. We are committed to providing you with the best possible experience.

education is the responsibility of the state. Coming to an international school to pay tuition is a cultural shift," she says. "Then, we ask them for a donation, and it's even more of a shift."

How do schools change that mindset? At ISK, Wells first conducted a communications audit to determine what was and was not working. ISK's weekly electronic newsletter, for example, wasn't being read. It was unattractive, and its frequency meant the articles lacked depth. Stories in the now redesigned bimonthly newsletter focus on celebrating student achievements. Parents also shared their frustration with long delays in receiving email responses from school staff. Instituting a 24-hour response policy helped. By adjusting the style and frequency of communications, as well as the content and messages, ISK has set the stage for a new fundraising effort.

Communications can also help to foster a sense of community—and a clear definition of that community's expectations. "A community with no bystanders" is one of three strategic goals at UNIS Hanoi. That's a recurrent attitude at many schools.

"We tell parents from the beginning that tuition only covers 91 percent of costs, and annual giving covers the other 9 percent. Enjoy the wonderful things this school has to offer, but remember you are benefitting from what others have given," says Glass in Atlanta. The strategy works: 86 percent of AIS parents give, with some grade levels achieving 100 percent participation.

The message from the Singapore American School to parents? Small gifts make a difference. In 2015, SAS stopped hosting big-ticket galas that were "exclusive and involved a small slice of our community," says Sarah Morris, chief advancement officer. Parents and alumni were asked to bring guests, bid in an auction, and purchase tickets or entire tables. Now, annual donors of 1,000 Singapore dollars or more qualify for the school's Eagle Society, which includes two tickets to an annual Eagle Society Soiree, and invitations to smaller events throughout the year. SAS also started an "Honor a Teacher" fund in which donors make an online gift in a teacher's name and write the honoree a note of appreciation. The suggested gift of SG\$50 is a far cry from the SG\$2,500 for a pair of tickets to one of the past galas but aligns well with SAS' strategy of encouraging all parents to give.

Websites, newsletters, and emails are useful tools,

but peer volunteers are invaluable for increasing engagement. The NIST Parent Teacher Association has smaller subgroups made up of families from the same home nations. Parents who don't give individually will often contribute to a group gift to a specific project. For example, NIST's Thai Constructive Comments Club and the Korean Country group donated 800,000 and 75,000 Thai bahts, respectively, to a buy-a-brick campaign to renovate older campus buildings.

At SAS, the PTA's yearly international fair brings families from the same countries together for food booths, which then compete to raise money. "It's so competitive that moms have started giving money directly to the PTA on top of what they've raised," Morris says.

More formally, the school has diversified its foundation board. "We just added a Chinese mom to our foundation board, and we'd love to add an Indian parent. We are working hard to figure out how to be inclusive," Morris says. "Donors have to see themselves on the fundraising committee. If they see a committee of all white Americans, they're more likely to think, 'That's for someone else.'" In 2010, 3.8 percent of parents gave. That figure has steadily grown: In 2015, 10.7 percent gave.

"Donors have to see themselves on the fundraising committee. If they see a committee of all white Americans, they're more likely to think, 'That's for someone else.'"

Sarah Morris, chief advancement officer, Singapore American School

Stressing the immediate impact of gifts is also key, says Seeger at Zurich International School, where the average student stays three years. Visitors to ZIS' annual fund website can choose between nearly two dozen grade-level or schoolwide projects to support in the current academic year. Each lists a price in Swiss francs. Parents, about 35 percent of whom give annually, choose the projects.

SAS uses a similar strategy. "The point of annual giving is to grow the current support. We get it this year, and we use it this year," Morris says. "Even for a transient population that should be compelling: Your child will benefit."



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WORLD FLAVORS: During the Singapore American School's annual international fair, families from the same country teamed up at food booths to compete with other booths to raise money. Participants pose at the China booth (top left), India booth (bottom left); and Korea booth (right).

Foreign Foibles

Globally, fundraising is an emerging practice, and many countries lack “charitable or tax incentives for giving,” Miller says.

Sometimes, the challenge is even more basic. When Silva started at UNIS in Hanoi, the business office could accept only cash donations. Now, they have a dedicated bank account for accepting gifts, with a

streamlined paperwork process, and use an outside philanthropy site, *give2asia.org*, to accept credit card donations. The site usage fees aren't ideal, but the system gives donors the much-desired credit card option and affords U.S. donors a tax benefit. Other schools provided tax benefits for American donors by creating a U.S.-based foundation, which also leverages gifts.

The American School in London, which completed



SINGAPORE AMERICAN SCHOOL

a £23 million campaign for its endowment and new state-of-the-art facilities in March 2016, offers its donors multiple options. U.S. taxpayers can contribute to the 501(c)(3) American School in London Foundation or give to the ASL Foundation (UK) Ltd. for simultaneous tax benefits in the U.S. and the U.K., if they are also U.K. taxpayers. “That’s been a huge help to our efforts,” says Sandy Mateus,

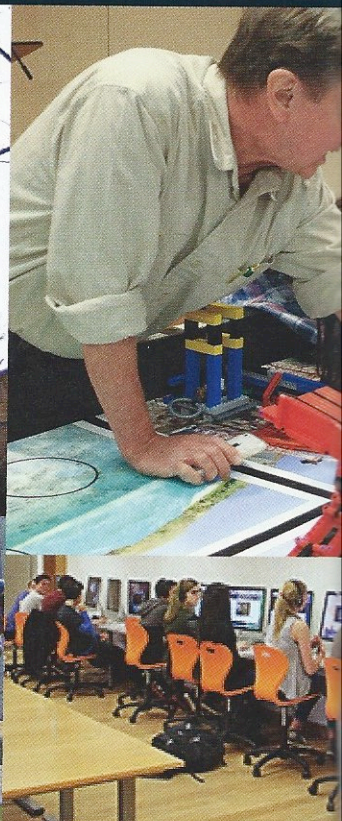
associate director of advancement for major gifts. When a U.K. taxpayer contributes, the school can claim an additional 25 percent through the U.K.’s Gift Aid program for registered charities. For dual taxpayers who donate, say, £2,000 to the annual fund, the school can claim £500 in Gift Aid, and donors can deduct the entire £2,500 from their U.S. taxes using that day’s exchange rate. The school



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STATE OF THE ART In March 2016, the American School in London completed a £23 million campaign for its endowment and cutting-edge facilities, including (left) an art building, (middle top) robotics space, (middle bottom) digital classroom, and (right) art studio.



collects a bigger gift from donors, and donors benefit from a larger U.S. tax deduction.

At some schools, though, expats aren't necessarily the biggest givers. Schools are getting better at cultivating relationships with wealthy local families. For Europeans, it can mean using ambassador families to help new families adjust and introduce them to a giving culture. "For our Vietnamese and Korean parents, we write all fundraising communications to them in their own language," Silva says. "It's especially helpful when that message comes from a peer."

Morris raised a record SG\$3.7 million in 2015, thanks in part to generous gifts from two board members, but she has a deep pool of untapped, potential donors. "We have a number of high net worth individuals. They are wealthy but not necessarily charitable," she says. "That's the gap we need to bridge."

How? "We're going to use our foundation board members to host small events throughout the year," Morris says. "It has to be a really personal invitation for our wealthiest potential donors, especially those from a prominent family. They tend to be private."

Getting Alumni Involved

Like other areas of advancement, alumni relations is a relatively new concern for international schools. Miller describes visiting a school where alumni records consisted of 3x5 cards stored in shoeboxes. While most schools are a little more sophisticated, alumni relations is often still in the early stages. The CASE international schools report found that responding institutions had a median of 2,100 living and contactable alumni. Alumni donors are sparse: A median of three gave to their international school in 2015.

Folding them into the community starts with messaging. ZIS defines alumni as all former students, parents, staff, and faculty. "We are all one ZIS community. We are bound together by a shared experience at school. It spans generations and continents," says Seeger of ZIS. "We've had tremendously positive feedback for that. We are all part of the family."

For the 2015-16 annual fund, donors had the option of supporting networking events for international alumni. The school's glossy community magazine, *Voices*, relaunched in spring 2016 and



now includes more content of interest to alumni. In 2013, using a gift from a 1980 alumna, the school launched the John Mattern Alumni Award for Faculty. Each year, all alumni are invited to nominate a former faculty or staff member for the award, which includes a prize of 1,500 Swiss francs for the recipient.

After joining Hong Kong International School as chief advancement officer, Maziar Sabet realized that the school focused on graduates only in Hong Kong, despite having 47,000-plus alumni worldwide. “I realized it has to be a priority for us to wrap our arms around the alumni community to add value to the school,” he says. Largely using social media, HKIS has created 10 active alumni networks in cities around the world, including New York, Los Angeles, London, and Singapore. “If you graduate from HKIS and head to any of these cities, you immediately have a support group,” he says.

Through the groups, the school is learning more about the achievements of HKIS alumni and sharing those successes on its website and in its publications.

The school still sees itself in the “friend raising” stage of its advancement efforts. “It’s a growing movement here. We haven’t directly solicited our alumni in a meaningful way,” Sabet says. “We aren’t ready to ask yet.”

Miller, the consultant, says nascent advancement operations have their work cut out for them. “We tell students to go out as global citizens and build a better world. They don’t think of us as a place in need of support,” Miller says. “We have to learn how to turn that around.”

One key advantage: If their schools are providing a quality education, it makes advancement officers’ jobs a whole lot easier.

“Keep being a great teacher,” Morris tells the faculty at SAS, when making presentations about advancement work. “If families are happy, they’ll choose to give.” ■

SUSAN DALZELL is a freelance journalist who has also worked extensively as a communicator for universities in the U.S. and England. She is based in Tokyo.